

HCS HB 654 & 938 -- VETERAN'S PROGRAMS AND THE STOLEN VALOR ACT

SPONSOR: Day

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Veterans by a vote of 11 to 0.

This substitute increases from \$750,000 to \$1 million the amount of matching grants to be made annually for veterans' service officer programs by the Missouri Veterans Commission.

The Stolen Valor Act of 2007 is established which makes it unlawful for any person to knowingly misrepresent himself or herself as a veteran or a medal recipient. Any violation of the provisions of the substitute will be a class A misdemeanor for the first offense and a class D felony for any second or subsequent offense.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of Less than \$100,000 in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010. Estimated Cost on Other State Funds of \$250,000 in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPONENTS: Supporters testifying for House Bill 654 say that with the limited number of veteran service officers it is difficult for veterans to receive the help they need when applying for veteran benefits. The bill will increase the number of veteran service officers and will help the transportation problems that exist in getting these veterans to hospitals to receive the care they need.

Supporters testifying for House Bill 938 say that there is a need to prevent individuals from misrepresenting themselves as veterans. Medals awarded for military service are readily available and can be easily purchased. There have been many documented cases throughout the country where individuals claimed to be recipients of these medals; but in reality, they were committing fraud.

Testifying for HB 654 were Representative Stream; Ernie Lee, Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations; Missouri Veterans Commission; Hal Dulle, Marine Corp League, Department of Missouri; Dewey Reihn, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Missouri Council; and George Newell, Vietnam Veterans of American, Missouri State Council. Testifying for HB 938 were Representative Dusenberg; Dewey Reihn, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Missouri Council and Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations; Missouri Veterans Commission; and Hal Dulle, Marine Corp League, Department of Missouri.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.